CHAPTER III

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE BOWEN DISTRICT

Exploration.

The rapid expansion of settlement caused by the squatting movement of the 1830's and 1840's raised the hope that a great northern river system would be discovered to provide a new, cheap area for pastoral exploitation. As early as 1843, the New South Wales Legislative Council supported a motion seeking the establishment of an overland route from New South Wales to Port Essington because of its trading potential with Asia¹ and the possibility of opening up valuable new grazing lands. Eventually, in 1844-5, Ludwig Leichhardt made this journey and in doing so dramatically brought the attention of the rest of Australia to the vast area watered by the Burdekin and its tributaries. He came upon the region in

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¹ Bolton, op. cit., pp. 10; 11.
mid-February (that is, in the wet season) and saw it at its best. He described the district as 'one of the finest we had seen. It was very open, with some plains, slightly undulating, or rising into ridges, beautifully grassed, and with sound ground'. He was even more enthusiastic about the Upper Burdekin: 'the most picturesque landscape we had yet met with ... all the elements of a fine pasturing land were here united .... Finer stations for the squatter cannot exist'. Leichhardt's enthusiasm aroused the interest of southern Australia and some were convinced that the north would prove more valuable than the south.

This interest was drawn away by the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria and the availability of much more accessible

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3. Ibid., pp. 241; 242; 243.
pastures in southern Queensland which Leichhardt in 1844-5 and Mitchell in 1846 had revealed.

The 1855-6 expedition of A.C. and F.T. Gregory from Victoria River in Western Australia to Central Queensland redirected attention to the north. The Gregory brothers, experienced colonials and respected surveyors, commented favourably on the Burdekin Valley. 'The extent of country suited to squatting purposes is very considerable,' Augustus Gregory wrote, 'water forming a never failing stream throughout the whole distance'.

It was inevitable, therefore, that, as the squatters' hold on the land in New South Wales and Victoria was challenged, some pastoralists would look to the Burdekin, especially as it was soon to be part of a separate colony which the squatter interest hoped to dominate.

An imaginative adventurer, George

Elphinstone Dalrymple produced a germane plan for a pastoral settlement on the Burdekin. Asking for subscriptions of at least £50 per person, he raised over £1,000 with which he equipped an expedition to explore the region and to provide rough maps marking out the best land for sheep stations. Under the existing New South Wales land laws the subscribers could have then tendered for the runs when the district was proclaimed open for settlement. Dalrymple's brother, Ernest, and the Leslies had previously

6. Farnfield, *Frontiersman*, Prelude and Chapter I. George Elphinstone Dalrymple, was born in 1826, the tenth son of an Aberdeenshire baronet. He came to Queensland somewhere between 1856 and 1858, after gaining colonial experience in Ceylon and the East Indies. In Queensland he was an explorer, civil servant, pastoralist, entrepreneur, and parliamentarian. After exploring the Burdekin, he founded the towns of Bowen and Cardwell in the 1860's, led an expedition to explore the north-east coast of Queensland in 1873, and in 1874 was appointed officer-in-charge of the Government settlement at Somerset on the eastern tip of Cape York. Here he became seriously ill, was invalided home to Scotland, and died in southern England in 1876.
made just such a coup on the Darling Downs. Dalrymple set out on 16 August 1859 from Marlborough, traversed the region watered by the Burdekin, Suttor, and Belyando, and returned in April 1860 with glowing accounts of land 'undoubtedly capable of becoming one of the finest and largest pastoral and agricultural regions of Australia'. He thought it likely that gold would be found and that the coastal plains would be especially suitable for cotton, sugar, and tobacco. However his party encountered such large numbers of persistently hostile Aborigines that Dalrymple concluded that a chain of police outposts would be necessary to allow safe, white settlement.

The hopes of his backers had seemed well founded as, three weeks before separation, the New South Wales Government had declared open for pastoral settlement the Mitchell and the Kennedy

districts the latter of which encompassed the region drained by the Burdekin and its tributaries. However the first Queensland Government was vitally concerned with the problem of land legislation and most suspicious that the capitalists supporting Dalrymple had received such favourable consideration. The Treasurer Mackenzie considered most of them mere speculators and consequently the Executive countermanded the Kennedy and Mitchell proclamations until the Queensland Parliament could debate the land question.

Because of Dalrymple's knowledge of the country, and in compensation for his effort, he was appointed Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Kennedy District, which meant that he was to take charge of the colonization. He was asked to accompany Lt.J.W. Smith in the schooner Spitfire to explore the coast, to search for the mouth of the Burdekin, and to examine the suitability of the recently discovered Port Denison as a port of access. This expedition, which left Brisbane on 14 August 1860 and returned in October, was the
first launched by a Queensland Government. The Burdekin proved useless for navigation but the suitability of Port Denison as the port of entry for the Kennedy and northern Mitchell districts was established beyond doubt. Lt. Smith, Dalrymple, and botanist Fitzallan all published accounts of the expedition and all again stressed the numbers and ferocity of the Aborigines whose reputation was being established even before settlement.

By this time the Queensland Government had passed its land legislation which it hoped would encourage a quick taking up of land without speculation. The Government advertised its intention of accepting applications for pastoral runs in the Kennedy from 1 January 1861 and stressed that settlers would be well protected. 8

Invasion, Resistance, and Good Intentions.

It is proposed to open the Kennedy district to occupation on January 1st, 1861. The local Commissioner of Crown Lands (Mr G.E. Dalrymple) will proceed from Rockhampton with a strong party of Queensland Native Police, for the protection of the settlers .... A vessel will be despatched to convey thither by sea the necessary stores etc.

Persons desirous of availing themselves of his Escort should apply forthwith to the Commissioner for Crown Lands.

_Government Gazette, 20 November 1860._

The government schooner _Jeannie Dove_ and the ketch _Santa Barbara_ sailed from Rockhampton on 15 March 1861 carrying officials, settlers, their families, and stores. Dalrymple had given specific instructions that, if the ships arrived before the land party, they were not to disembark the passengers on the mainland but to camp on nearby Stone Island until the land party arrived. He wanted to ensure that first contacts with the Aborigines did not end in disaster for the settlers.

9. ibid., p. 25. Quoted.
or impair future relations with the Aborigines. The presence of the mounted land party, he hoped, would deter any opposition or rout it if absolutely necessary.¹⁰

Dalrymple was highly critical of the 'strong party of Queensland Native Police' sent to protect the settlers. The officer's irresponsibility even delayed the departure from Rockhampton by two weeks and from his first camp at Yaamba he complained: 'The force sent with me to perform the most difficult and dangerous duty which any part of this force has to perform, is in no way such as to inspire me with confidence.'¹¹ A number of squatters, however, had joined the party to enjoy the security and, as expected, were mostly 'tough experienced men who wanted to escape the increasing restrictions on pastoral tenure in

¹⁰. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 24 April 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A16, 1261 of 1861.
¹¹. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 28 February 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A13, 660 of 1861.
southern colonies. Probably the formidable size of this group intimidated the Aborigines as the expedition was accomplished without bloodshed.

Dalrymple, soon found himself at odds with the Native Police when he discovered that some of the troopers had their gins with them. Fearing that the presence of women on such an expedition might lead to friction and concerned that the dignity of founding a new colony might be besmirched by such camp followers, he ordered the gins to be sent back. In case of any future misunderstanding, Dalrymple requested, and was given, control of the Native Police on the understanding that he interfered with the officer as little as possible. It is apparent that neither the Commandant of the

12. Farnfield, Frontiersman, p. 29.
13. Dalrymple to Lt. Williams in charge of the Native Police detachment, 28 February 1861 (copy); enclosed in Dalrymple, P.M. Port Denison, to Col. Sec., 20 May 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A17, 1527 of 1861.
14. Morisset, Commandant of Native Mounted Police, to Col. Sec., 11 March 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A13, 629 of 1861 enclosed in 660 of 1861. There is a minute to this effect.
Native Police nor his government minister wanted a civilian official in a position where he could restrict the functioning of the force. This eventuality did not arise on the rest of the journey and, on 10 April, Dalrymple led a forward party on to the beach at Port Denison to see the Jeannie Dove and Santa Barbara anchored off Stone Island. 15

As there had been many Aborigines camped near the harbour, Dalrymple's order had probably prevented hostilities breaking out with the sea-borne party. He reported his success with the rather naive hope that the Aborigines would calmly accept the inevitable:

[Handwritten note: Ha! parties landed on foot hostilities would have inevitably taken place, Blacks would have been killed and our relations to the Aborigines would have commenced with the lust for revenge which cannot now exist and leaving only a jealousy of the stranger which must soon yield to the spread of occupation introducing quiet resignation to an irresistible force.] 16

Dalrymple's calm and optimistic expression of his

15. Dalrymple, 24 April, 1861, op.cit.
16. Dalrymple, 24 April, 1861, op.cit.
attempt to establish a new relationship with the Aborigines clearly indicated his lack of understanding of the sacred and material ties the Aborigines had with their tribal land. He did not realize the need for aliens to get permission before trespassing or the desecration of sacred sites that generally followed European use of the land. Indeed, when the settlement satisfied most of its need for water by appropriating some large Aboriginal wells, the Aborigines were probably immediately alienated by such an important loss.17 Neither did he realize that the increasing restriction of the Aborigines' freedom of movement, which he regarded as inevitable, was going to change their whole way of life and lead to a fiercer reaction than the pathetic 'jealousy of the stranger' which he envisaged.

As two weeks passed without any reported conflict, Dalrymple had some justification for

17. Ibid., and Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 25 May 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A17, 1526 of 1861.
his roseate optimism. However, within three days of his writing the above letter, three squatters were driven back to the settlement by a large party of Aborigines whom Dalrymple feared were combining 'with hostile intent' for a large-scale, organized attack from the south and the north-west. He was in two minds. He wanted the Aborigines menacing the township and hindering the squatters 'dispersed' and demanded daily patrols by the Native Police; yet he wanted the settlement formed with as little loss of Aboriginal life as possible. He felt constrained to inform Lt. Powell, then officer in charge, that he wanted defensive measures only adopted. With far reaching patrols of an offensive nature, Powell had been following the usual method of quietening a district, thus vitiating any prospect Dalrymple had of not arousing the Aborigines. Worse still, Dalrymple felt Powell was leaving
the tiny settlement defenceless.18

This difference of opinion again raised the whole question of whether a civilian could control the Native Police. The issue was clouded, however, as Dalrymple's demand for defensive patrolling to disperse possible attacks involved a retraction of his former aim that he wanted no bloodshed. The aims of Dalrymple and the Native Police officer were now closer together. When Dalrymple demanded daily patrols close to the settlement, Powell, who had not been informed of Dalrymple's authority, replied that, as a Native Police officer, he would use his own judgement.19 As Dalrymple believed such a division of authority could prove disastrous or cause 'Agression [sic] retaliation and


19. Powell to Dalrymple, 6 May 1861, enclosed in COL/A17, 1527 of 1861.
bloodshed by both Aborigines and settlers, he asked the Colonial Secretary to explain his, Dalrymple's, authority over all government instrumentalities in the Kennedy District.  

In this way, Dalrymple was trying, as before, to limit the excesses of the Native Police in the hope that some sort of accord could still be made with the local Aborigines; yet he had to use the same body to protect the settlement and to further the interests of the squatters. Nowhere was it more apparent that the conventional use of the Native Police would antagonize the Aborigines and inhibit overtures to achieve understanding.

Dalrymple's concern for the safety of the settlement indicated that his authority over Lt. Powell would not change the nature of the force's work but merely direct its efforts.

His concern increased to alarm when four of the eleven troopers deserted and the remainder were unimpressive and showing signs of deserting. While Lt. Williams pursued the deserters with four of the remaining seven troopers, there was a totally inadequate force to protect the settlement.

Dalrymple's initial hope of cowing the Aborigines into submission by the display of an overpowering, invading force had hope of success only while the colonists were collected together at Bowen. The squatters' party had found itself confronted by approximately 120 Aborigines only ten miles from the settlement, indicating to the Europeans a menacing ability to organize. Lt. Powell's detachment, with a number of volunteers, had ridden out to disperse the Aborigines, encountered about 200 fighting men at the same place, but failed to break their strength as they took refuge in a vast reed-covered swamp. At the same time, Dalrymple had put the Jeannie Dove's captain in charge of the defence
of Bowen while he set off with two of his orderlies and a black trooper to patrol between Bowen and the Don River. Within two miles of Bowen he met a party of armed Aborigines and immediately dispersed them.21

The first encounter with the Port Denison Aborigines had shaken Dalrymple's confident optimism. Communications between the two races were non-existent and misunderstanding and fear inevitable. The Aborigines could not have understood the significance of the coming of the Europeans nor the Europeans any traditional significance of such a large number of Aborigines so close to Bowen. Dalrymple considered the Aborigines' intentions must have been malevolent and their numbers proof of a superior ability to combine for political and military purposes.22

21. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 28 April 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A16, 1262 of 1861. This letter gives a full account of first contacts with the Aborigines.

22. Ibid.
Thus, the recurring colonial fear that the latest Aborigines encountered would use their numbers effectively became a firm and frightening conviction. Yet there is no reason to assume that even an assemblage of two hundred men was necessarily forming to attack the settlement for Morrill described much larger gatherings. 23

Dalrymple's sudden realization of his own vulnerability made him fear the worst and forsake his previous policy of restraint. So, too, did the knowledge that the Aborigines had such an impregnable fastness so close to town. Dalrymple urged the reinforcement of the Native Police to twenty-four troopers, two officers, and one camp sergeant; that is, he wanted approximately one-fifth of the whole force to enable the still tiny settlement to proceed safely. He even wanted a three or four pounder gun with grapeshot to replace

the armaments of the *Jeannie Dove* when that ship departed\textsuperscript{24} and decided to construct a 'sort of stockade' until reinforcements arrived. While he feared a mass attack, his role as Commissioner for Crown Lands was obviously of secondary importance. He considered a peaceful settlement of the district now impossible. On first encounter the Aborigines had proved aggressive; therefore they would have to suffer to ensure the safety of the Europeans. The experiment was terminated and Dalrymple's naive hope that they would peacefully accept the new order was abandoned before the month was out.

It is difficult to follow the course of hostilities in the next month. Between 28 April and 20 May 1861, there is no official record yet, on the latter date, Dalrymple blamed the weakness of his force for the shedding of Aboriginal blood which apparently had been occurring. He

\textsuperscript{24} Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 28 April 1861, op.cit.
maintained that the Aborigines were hostile because their numbers had given them courage to attack the squatters venturing out and the squatters had adopted justifiable measures to preserve their lives. On 20 May he wrote: '... an almost necessity impels the whiteman to adopt hostile measures for the preservation of his life from a numerical preponderance capable equally of wearing him out or overwhelming him with numbers'.

One account of Bowen's early history written by one of the squatters present at the founding describes how the Aborigines several times, at dawn, tried to attack the settlement but were driven off before they could cause damage: '... and on one occasion the native troopers were led against them and gave them such a severe drubbing as will be remembered by

25. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 20 May 1861, op. cit.
the tribe for many a day to come'. Eight years later a correspondent to the Port Denison Times wrote: 'We know that our own town at least had its foundations cemented in blood'. And although this newspaper carried a lively correspondence on the history of Aboriginal-European relations in the Bowen district for many weeks, no one rebutted this particular charge.

By 20 May 1861, runs had been taken up in an unbroken line 350 miles along the Burdekin and its tributaries, about 130 miles inland; that is, virtually the whole of the area being studied in this thesis was alienated within six weeks. As the squatters moved out, their method of dispossessing the Aborigines was unsupervised and unrecorded but largely predetermined.

26. Michael W. Cunningham, 'The Pioneering of the River Burdekin'. Original in the possession of Mr. E. Cunningham, Strathmore Station, Collinsville, Queensland. This article contains some factual errors but it is probable that this account is correct.

27. P.D.T., 1 May 1869. In an article entitled: 'Shall we Admit the Blacks'.

by circumstance. One force was invading, the other defending, and there was no communication between them until well after hostilities had broken out.

By December 1861, pacification was going on in the tried and trusted way found so successful for Europeans in the south. Systematically, the Aborigines were being driven out of the river valleys that were essential to the economies of both races. Lt. Powell, returning from a routine patrol, reported the Bogie River valley nearly cleared of large mobs of Aborigines. The Bowen, however, was still occupied by 'immense numbers' gathering opposite the stations of Henning, Allingham, Sellheim, and King. Twice Powell had dispersed war parties of sixty to eighty men on the Bowen; and 'Mr. Sellheim had to form a party for the purpose of scattering a large number of Blacks, who had nearly surrounded a small party of his working men'. On the same day, Powell had dispersed a 'mob' on the Bowen only thirty miles away. Powell believed that his forces were inadequate to protect parties then occupying the
Bowen and Burdekin yet settlers were already on the Suttor and Belyando. This astonishing spread of settlement obviously posed problems too great for the limited human and material resources of the Queensland Government.

Somehow Dalrymple had to spread his forces to offer some protection to the Europeans as the circumstances of the settlement drove any practical concern for the Aborigines from his mind. He sent one officer and eight troopers to the Bowen River, which left him one officer, one sergeant, and four troopers to protect Port Denison and to visit the Upper Burdekin. Again he demanded greater re-inforcements. He wanted a permanent detachment on the Upper Burdekin, another on the Belyando, fifty miles from its junction with the Lower Burdekin, as well as the Port Denison detachment: a total force of four officers and twenty-four troopers. Within eight months he had become an active participant in what had


become an all out racial war.

It does not need much imagination to realize the disastrous effect of such violence on Aboriginal life as the Native Police drove Aborigines from their tribal areas into precipitous conflict with incomprehending neighbours. If the Aborigines used their numerical preponderance, the Native Police or squatter vigilantes dispersed them with superior weapons and mobility. No inquests were held concerning the killing of Aborigines and there was apparently no one in the Port Denison district who questioned the price to the Aborigines of the spread of civilization. No frontiersman raised the cry that the Aborigines were British citizens. Even if open war had not been declared, the Kennedy district was obviously in that state despite the one sided nature of the contest.

... ... ...

The murder on 27 August 1861 of a Mr. Henry Irving, squatter of Broadsound, and Nicholas Millar,
seaman, by Aborigines on Shaw Island in the Whitsunday Group evoked a reaction from the colonists which is worth noting. A Mr. Byerley of Rockhampton urged the Colonial Secretary to protect traders between north and south Queensland 'it being perfectly certain that no crew of any vessel if unfortunately cast away in that neighbourhood could escape being butchered by these deliberately hostile tribes'. Byerley thought that the Native Police ought 'to rid the islands of the scourge or at least to teach them such a lesson as would effectively prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe'.

Dalrymple was moved to paroxysms of horror. The Aborigines were 'bloodthirsty, treacherous, and unworthy of trust. So long as they [thought] the white man [was] master they [were] cringing

and servile - but watching the unguarded moment which should give them an easy prey. After enumerating all the incidents of violence and 'treachery' he could think of back to the murders of Kennedy and Leichhardt in the 1840's and blaming the Aborigines for murdering a multitude of shipwrecked mariners who had vanished without trace, he concluded that they were

a race of bloodthirsty miscreants who believed in no God, nor in any spiritual power, who cannot even trust each other in their own domestic intercourse and who are enemies to all men until fear enforces submission.32

The change in Dalrymple's tone caused by his experience and frontier tension is obvious; indeed both letters are good examples of the frontier hatred that ensured the continuation of hostilities until the Aborigines' aggressive capability was totally destroyed. The letters also illustrate the blindness of the European mind to the Aborigines' right to resist. Even

32. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 10 October 1861, Q.S.A. COL/A22, 2787 of 1861.
though the Europeans had been driving the Aborigines from their tribal lands and killing them if they showed opposition, the invaders expressed horror at the perfidy of their enemies when they killed two Europeans. The killing of whites by spear or club was 'butchery', a 'catastrophe' a 'terrible fate' but shooting blacks down was 'ridding the islands of a scourge', 'teaching them a lesson', and 'enforcing submission' upon beings who were little better than savage animals.

Dalrymple's Plan to Replace the Native Police.

Yet it would be unfair to Dalrymple to think that he approved of the increasing amount of Aboriginal blood being shed or that he was incapable of more creative thought than his emotional outburst indicated. He still believed that the only way of safely allowing the expansion of the pastoral industry was by quelling the Aborigines with a display of superior force; but he thoroughly disapproved of the way the Native Police force was being used in the Kennedy district, which was its
normal usage heightened by the rapid expansion of settlement. Dalrymple knew that the Select Committee on the Native Police Force was to investigate the need to re-organize that body and, one month after seeing it in action, Dalrymple suggested an alternative to the Colonial Secretary. The suggestion of such an important public servant, a pragmatic frontiersman against whom no hint of Exeter Hall sentiment could be charged, was a very important, if indirect, indictment of the existing force. As befitted a public servant, he limited his remarks 'to the requirements of this district' but they applied to the whole Native Police force. He repeated his basic hypothesis that a superior force would cow the Aborigines and added that it would give the whites confidence to risk the first friendly overtures which would lead to the Aborigines' accepting European dominance. The existing force could only punish outrages committed for which task, he believed, the Native Police was the most efficient, especially in thick scrub. But once again he urged that a new system be tried in the Kennedy district, particularly as it was largely
open country. He suggested a properly organized white mounted police, well officered, with two black trackers to every six troopers, under the direct control of the chief government officer in the district. He emphasised the need for good officers, preferably ex-British or ex-Indian cavalry officers, while the troopers should be selected from smart, young, colonial stockmen of good character. Dalrymple estimated that a force of about sixty troopers and their officers would bring peace to the Kennedy District, after which it could be used in settling other districts. With such a force, Dalrymple believed 'that two-thirds of the bloodshed which the occupation of a large district entails would be avoided'.

He criticised the insufficient strength of the existing force and, by implication, the unsupervised and potentially irresponsible leadership of a detachment of compliant Aborigines. He wanted a supervised force of regulars, susceptible to

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33. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 20 May 1861, _op. cit._
normal military discipline and large enough to intimidate by frequent patrolling. His criticism was justified as the small size of the Bowen Native Police Force made it inevitable that each detachment would be provocatively aggressive in its attempt to break Aboriginal resistance because of its inability to remain in the area for very long. The policy of dispersal could hardly have been implemented without violence, no matter what the size of the force, but, on this more complex question of the policy underlying Native Police action, as well as the problem of how the Aborigines could peacefully survive when their natural food supply was limited, Dalrymple said nothing, probably because of his ignorance of Aboriginal life. When the philosophy underlying Native Police action was changed over thirty years later, the force proved that it could be used as a conciliatory influence on the frontier. 34

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Dalrymple's criticism of the Native Police officers was not evoked because his officers were unusually bad. After his first disagreement with Powell, his only criticism of the officer was that he was carrying out normal Native Police patrolling too diligently for Dalrymple's initial placatory intentions. Yet at the 1861 Select Committee inquiry, Commandant Morisset declared that, in the Kennedy district, Powell was intemperate while in charge of chiefly raw recruits.\textsuperscript{35} Lt. Williams upon whom both Dalrymple and the Commandant showered praise\textsuperscript{36} was judged by Powell's successor, Marlow, 'a good patrol officer when away from temptation'.\textsuperscript{37} Both officers obviously drank too much even for the lax standards of the frontier.

\textsuperscript{35} 'Minutes of Evidence' in \textit{1861 V. & P.}, p.145.
\textsuperscript{36} Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 28 February 1861. Morisset to Col. Sec., 11 March 1861, op. cit.
Yet there is no reason to think them atypical. Dalrymple simply considered that a better type of man was needed for such responsible positions.

There were others who supported the idea of a white mounted police with black trackers to assist, even Governor Bowen himself, but the Select Committee reported against it and the Government was pleased to preserve the existing composition of the force. Nor is it hard to see why. To find the manpower Dalrymple suggested would have entailed a great increase in expenditure, even if such men could be found while the pastoral industry and southern goldfields offered such allurement. The old eastern Australian way of breaking the weak resistance of the Aborigines was cheap and effective.

Although Dalrymple's plan was ignored, his

38. Q.S.A. Governors' Correspondence. Outward Despatch No. 74 of 1861, 16 December 1861.

devising it on the frontier made an important commentary on the conflict and the Queensland Government's policy for dealing with it.

'Keeping the Blacks Out'.

As Dalrymple was unable to inaugurate changes, relations between Aborigines and Europeans in the Bowen district followed the usual pattern. All settlers 'kept them out'. What this entailed was described by a correspondent to the *Port Denison Times* who wrote, not to criticise past events, but to urge caution when the Aborigines were finally 'let in'. There was no reply asserting that he had exaggerated and more lurid accounts were written around this time.\(^{40}\)

He declared the past treatment of the Aborigines was bloody but inevitable because, although most were friendly, some were treacherous,

\(^{40}\) *P.D.T.* 20 November 1869. The article is entitled 'A Black Protector'.
forcing the pioneers 'to keep them out':

that is, never to allow them near a camp, out-station, head-station, or township; consequently they were hunted by anyone if seen in open country, and driven away or shot down when caught out of the scrub and broken ground. This course adopted by the early settlers and pioneers was unavoidable, and quite necessary under the existing circumstances.

He mentioned the extra men employed to protect the runs but asserted the Europeans would have still been at the mercy of the Aborigines if they had been 'let in' and realized the weakness of the squatters. With great frankness he admitted:

This system of keeping them out, however has led to dreadful results ... /for/ every bushman had to take the law into his own hands in self-defence, and for a time every man's hand was against the blacks, and their hands against every man - as those who had been peacefully inclined towards the settlers at first became revengeful, and committed several most horrible murders, ... and /killed/ sheep, cattle, and horses. 41

At the risk of repetition, Curr's classic description of the pattern of frontier contact in Queensland will be quoted. He gave it when discussing Chatfield's description of the Cape River

41. ibid.
Aborigines, apparently feeling that Chatfield's notes accorded with the 'stereotype'. He even quoted a little directly from Chatfield. The description is emotional and dramatically heightened but it will be seen that much of the evidence of contact in the Bowen district points to its general truth. In the 1880's this was what the rest of Australia were told was past and current Queensland native policy on the frontier.

The territory of the Pegulloburra, Mr. Chatfield informs me, was first occupied as a station in 1863, but the tribe was not what is technically called let in until 1868. Generally, after the first occupation of a tract of country by a settler, from three to ten years elapse before the tribe or tribes to which the land has belonged from time immemorial is let in, that is, is allowed to come to the homestead, or seek for food within a radius of five or ten miles of it. During this period the squatter's party and the tribe live in a state of warfare; the former shooting down a savage now and then when opportunity offers, and calling in the aid of the Black Police from time to time to avenge in a wholesale way the killing or frightening of stock off the run by the tribe. Acting on the well-known feature of aboriginal ethics, that every male stranger is an enemy, who must, if possible, be slain, the Queensland Government has largely availed itself of its aboriginal population for the purpose of
punishing aboriginal aggressions. The stereotyped proceedings which follow the taking up of a run may be described in this way, and if I mention them, it is only on the chance that further publicity—for they are well known—may possibly contribute to the adoption of more humane measures.

When the settler then locates his stock on a piece of country hitherto in the sole possession of a tribe, the roots, grass-seeds, and game on which the people habitually live quickly fail. Then come hunger and also anger, for amongst themselves the hunting or gathering of food by a tribe on land which does not belong to it is always considered a casus belli by the rightful proprietors; just as in our case to take or destroy a neighbour's sheep or cabbages is a punishable act. Then some cattle are speared, or frightened off the run by the mere presence of the Blacks in search of food. In either of these events the Blacks are attacked and some of them shot down. In revenge, a shepherd or stockman is speared. Recourse is then had to the Government; half-a-dozen or more young Blacks in some part of the colony remote from the scene of the outrage are enlisted, mounted, armed, liberally supplied with ball cartridges, and despatched to the spot under the charge of a Sub-inspector of Police. Hot for blood, the Black troopers are laid on the trail of the tribe; then follow the careful tracking, the surprise, the shooting at a distance safe from spears, the deaths of many of the males, the capture of the women, who know that if they abstain from flight they will be spared; the gratified lust of the savage, and the Sub-inspector's report that the tribe has been "dispersed" for such is the official term used to convey the occurrence of these proceedings. When the tribe has gone through
several repetitions of this experience, and the chief part of its young men been butchered, the women, the remnant of the men, and such children as the Black troopers have not troubled themselves to shoot, are let in, or allowed to come to the settler's homestead, and the war is at an end. Finally, a shameful disease is introduced, and finishes what the rifle began. The Pegulloburra were not let in until 1868, having in the interim, Mr. Chatfield says, "been murdered by Whites and Native Police wherever seen." When they were let in, there were only 125 able-bodied men left, the numbers of the women and children being considerably greater. 42

The pioneers, thus, saw themselves in a state of siege against a numerically stronger force and feared that, if the Aborigines came to understand the ways of the European before their power was broken, they would profit by their experience and become a much more menacing enemy.

Yet it was a violation of one of the conditions of lease to deny the Aborigines free access to a run, and to the trees and waters on it. The squatters were legally bound to allow them to procure the animals, birds, fish, and other food

they needed. Despite this, there was no expectation that this would be done and no pretence of allowing them to move about freely. In 1867, as shall be noted later, an Under Colonial Secretary even rejected a request by a squatter, A.L. McDougall, that the Aborigines be let in, thus apparently involving the government in the support of an illegal policy.

As the conflict intensified, the greater grew the fear and the belief that the only solution

43. P.D.T., 13 April 1867. McDougall quoted the regulation when replying to the Under Colonial Secretary who had rejected McDougall's plea that the Aborigines be let in. The letters were reproduced in the newspaper.

44. A perusal of all Queensland acts relating in any way to the occupation or alienation of land between Session 1 of 1860 and the Sessions of 1874 and 1875 failed to reveal this condition of lease written into a statute. Provision was allowed for the government to set aside land 'for the use or benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country'. (Session 1 of 1860: 24 Victiae, Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act; Alienation of Crown Lands Act of 1860; Session 1 of 1861: 27 Victiae, Pastoral Leases Act of 1863; Session 1 of 1866-8: 31 Victiae, Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868). As the Under Colonial Secretary did not simply reject McDougall's assertion that the squatters were bound to allow the Aborigines free access to their runs, one must presume that such a condition was written into the actual contract between the government and the squatter. This I have not been able to check.
to the district's Aboriginal problem was the destruction of the Aborigines' potential for organizing his numerical preponderance. In this endeavour, the Native Police played a vital role. By early 1862 two camps were 'keeping order': one at Bowen and another on the Bowen River. Dalrymple pointed out that the unsatisfactory size and quality of the force would make the squatters take the law into their own hands,\textsuperscript{45} but the government was unwilling to grant an increase at that time.\textsuperscript{46} When Dalrymple returned to Brisbane in March 1862, he took with him a petition signed by thirteen influential residents requesting more Native Police protection because of the great number of applicants for land who had to take up the runs within nine months and

\textsuperscript{45} Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 22 February 1862, Q.S.A. COL/A26, 817 of 1862.

\textsuperscript{46} Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 22 February 1862, Q.S.A. COL/A26, 821 of 1862.
because of the 'extreme hostility of the Aborigines'. Yet in August 1862, the new Commandant Bligh reported that the frontier was completely protected. Following the eastern Australian pattern, the Queensland Government expected the squatters to be active partners in keeping the Aborigines out and defending their own property and did not intend to provide thoroughly adequate, police protection.

By the middle of 1862 two detachments of Native Police could not pretend to patrol the 454 runs and 31,504 square miles applied for, and a third detachment was stationed in the Upper Burdekin as Dalrymple had previously requested. By July 1863 there were twenty-three members of the Native Police in the Kennedy out of a total

47. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 14 May 1862, Q.S.A. COL/A29, 1428 of 1862.
49. Farnfield, Frontiersman, p. 38.
force. Bligh indicated the usual practice of removing detachments from pacified areas - in this case, the Wide Bay and Burnett districts - to send them to such newly occupied areas as the Kennedy. Such reinforcement received a temporary setback when the whole Upper Burdekin detachment of seven troopers deserted, probably because Lt. Williams had left them unsupervised for a time to seek 'temptation'. The Bowen district's high rate of desertion was not atypical.

The Spokesman for the Aborigines.

On 25 January 1863 a white man appeared in the Bowen district who could tell from personal experience how the Native Police and the 'keeping them out policy' affected the Aborigines. This

was James Morrill from whom open-minded people could have learned a lot. 51

Contrary to their later reputation for ferocity, the Aborigines were as afraid of the first whites they saw as the whites were of them. The mere sight of Morrill's shipwrecked party, suddenly produced at a corroboree, caused the assembled Aborigines to scamper off in all directions. 52 Later, when the first colonists arrived, the Aborigines were even afraid of their sheep, horses, and cattle. 53 It seems the very existence of these alien beings with their huge and numerous animals could not fit into the tradition-bound thinking of the Aborigines. The Europeans, the colour of men prepared for a funeral ritual, brought a new way of life with them and could not be long explained as returned spirits. As they rode by mounted terrifyingly on their huge horses, the Aborigines at first watched in awe from afar.

52. ibid., pp. 1; 13.
53. ibid., pp. 16; 17.
Morrill's account of Aboriginal reactions conflicts with the violent reception given to Dalrymple and the reasons for the difference can only be guessed at. His party may have encountered a particularly aggressive group or unwittingly desecrated an important sacred site and the word passed that the whites were malevolent beings. Perhaps they had been observed for a considerable time before the Aborigines overcame their fear and attacked; or perhaps one must simply accept the vagaries of human behaviour. The intrusion of the explorers did not seem to leave any lasting impression or, if so, such was not communicated intelligibly to Morrill. The Aborigines seem to have accepted the fleeting visits of the European mariners in their strange crafts with much more ease.\textsuperscript{54}.

Although Morrill casually declared the Aborigines were 'treacherous, jealous and

\textsuperscript{54} Jukes, \textit{Narrative of the Fly, Vol. I, Chapter III}.
cunning', there is nothing in his account to support this charge, and one suspects again either his imperfect understanding of Aboriginal life or Johns' imperfect expression. His story indicated that they were not inherently malicious, as many believed; they treated the shipwrecked Europeans with great and prolonged kindness. Morrill was able to differentiate between their sexual frankness and the European charge of sexual viciousness. They even respected the relationship between the Captain and his wife, showing none of the lust for the white woman which they were reputed to have; indeed Morrill affirmed their strictness in relations with one another in accordance with their non-European marital customs. He also pointed out the real difference between the Aborigines' ritual cannibalism and the imputed dietary cannibalism.

56. ibid., pp. 12; 14.
57. ibid., pp. 12; 25.
58. ibid., p. 22.
He told a sorry tale of misunderstanding, fear, and malice in the first encounters. In 1860, a ship, which Morrill believed to be the *Spitfire* carrying Dalrymple's party to explore the mouth of the Burdekin, hove to at Cape Cleveland. Morrill had asked the Aborigines, if ever they saw other white men, to make the newcomers understand that there was a white man living with them. Apparently they tried to do this so energetically that members of the expedition grew alarmed and fired at the seemingly menacing savages, killing a friend of Morrill and wounding another. 59 About three years later, Morrill heard of the next encounter. Some Aborigines were absorbed in lamenting the death of an old man when an unnoticed squatter fired upon them killing the old man's son. This apparently was his opening gambit in 'keeping them out'. Later these Aborigines induced the white man to dismount and slew him. Thinking

59. ibid., pp. 15; 16.
the horse was also a rational and malevolent being, they even tried to kill it. 60

From this time on reports of the encroaching whites increased, each one bringing fresh evidence of their power and ruthlessness. A party of white and black men - probably the Native Police with squatter volunteers - shot down the Port Denison Aborigines that Morrill had lived with. This news caused Morrill to move south to be closer to white settlement but the idea of armed blacks worried him lest he could not communicate with them. 61

Next, fifteen members of the tribe Morrill was then living with were shot dead while they were on a fishing expedition. 62 By 1863 the process of 'keeping them out' meant, to the Aborigines, that they could not safely win their livelihood from their own country.

They also realized that their tribal lands were being changed by even the presence of the

60. ibid., p. 16.
61. ibid., pp. 16; 17.
62. ibid., p. 17.
white man. Some of Morrill's companions described how a large herd of cattle had drunk a waterhole so dry that the fish were exposed temptingly for the taking if they had dared. As previously mentioned in Chapter I, Morrill described the great variety of edible plant life, much of which would have been destroyed by the vast numbers of sheep and cattle pouring into the region. Yet the food and water resources in the Aborigines' natural ecology were just sufficient to support the tribe in a dry season and these were being greatly limited. Eventually Morrill persuaded the Aborigines to let him go as an emissary to see if something could be salvaged of their previous existence.

In this way some Aborigines were made to realize that the Europeans had come to take away their land and, unique in the history of Aboriginal-European relations in Queensland, they

63. ibid.
64. ibid., pp. 20-22.
65. ibid., p. 17.
wished to come to terms. They wanted Morrill to ask the Europeans to let them keep the lands to the north of the Burdekin, to let them fish in the rivers, and to let them dig for roots in the coastal swamps that were valueless to the white man. Morrill probably inspired this offer of terms and was realistic enough to ask that at least the swampy coast lands be left to the Aborigines.  

Morrill publicised this request in his pamphlet, published in Brisbane in 1863, but there was no official response. It was unlikely that a squatter dominated government would legislate for a race it regarded as savage and barbarous, and inconceivable that the property rights of British capitalists would be sacrificed for a race who, from the first settlement, had been declared officially to have no land rights. Governor Bowen, himself, had endorsed this belief and claimed the Aborigines only 'wandered' over

66. ibid., pp. 18; 26.
the country. The European could reluctantly accept the property rights of pastoralists or farmers such as the Bantu, but not the nomadic hunters and food gatherers such as the Aborigines or Bushmen.

Morrill's knowledge of the Aborigines and his desire to help them were never utilized in the Bowen district much to the regret later of some humanitarians. In his obituary, the Port Denison Times reminded its readers that Morrill had always declared the Aborigines would be better managed by kindness than the customary harsh treatment. The article mentioned his willingness to join the police to act as a mediator and claimed the government was afraid he might rejoin the Aborigines and cause mischief. It is more likely

67. Q.S.A. Governor's Outward Despatch, 74 of 1861, 16 December 1861.
68. P.D.T., 22 May 1869. An article 'Shall We Admit the Blacks No. 3, by Rev. I. Black, Church of England Minister of Religion at Bowen.
69. P.D.T., 1 November 1865.
that the government was unwilling to contemplate such a radical change in policy which might slow down pastoral expansion, cost more, and lead them into a social-service instrumentality the infant government structure was not prepared for. Morrill, like Dalrymple, did not understand the basic conflict of cultures that would have required more than good will to provide a satisfactory solution and naively believed that the two ways of life could have co-existed. 70

The Continuation and Cost of Frontier Conflict.

Until 1868, there was no reported change in the policy of 'keeping them out'. As the land was more effectively occupied, the conflict worsened and the opposition of the Aborigines intensified. In July 1863, Commandant Bligh reported that the Aborigines were generally committing few 'crimes' on the frontier,71 whereas, by 1864, the newly established Fort Denison Times

70. P.D.T., 10 June 1865.
71. Bligh, Commandant of Native Police, to Col. Sec., 10 July 1863, Q.S.A. COL/A42, 1555 of 1863
was regularly reporting Aboriginal attacks. It seems that maximum conflict occurred between 1864 and 1866 in the Bowen district, and between 1864 and 1868 in the Kennedy district as a whole. Although the Aborigines killed comparatively few Europeans near Bowen, attempts to do so were frequent and the threat to life constant. For example, from the *Fort Denison Times* and the Colonial Secretary's files, it seems that four murders of Europeans near Bowen were recorded in 1864 but there were probably some others of vulnerable travellers not reported. In the more remote areas loss of European life was greater. On Natal Downs and the neighbouring stations approximately 150 miles west of Bowen, at least ten shepherds were killed during 1864. Here the Aborigines were often able to commit their murders

72. *P.D.T.*, this newspaper has been carefully perused from 5 March 1864 to December 1874.

73. *P.D.T.*, 20 November 1869. An article entitled 'A Black Protector'. My reading of the newspaper supports this.

and escape the retribution of the Native Police as it sometimes took a fortnight for a detachment to reach the scene from their camp on the Bowen River.\textsuperscript{75} Probably the squatters retaliated themselves but no mention was made of this. Elsewhere W.R.O. Hill, then manager of a station west of Bowen, well described squatter action and the tension of life on a station:

\begin{quote}
I can safely say that life was never safe, and the only wise thing to do on seeing a black was to shoot, and shoot straight, otherwise he would certainly spear you. \textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

In the Bowen district the Aborigines wreaked havoc upon the squatters' capital. A Burdekin squatter described the constant harassing of his cattle until they became too poor even for boiling down. Sometimes it took him months to collect them only to have them again driven off. He claimed twenty-seven of his cattle were killed in one night on one station, two

\textsuperscript{75} R. Kellet, J.P. Natal Downs, to Col. Sec., 26 January 1865, Q.S.A. COL/A64, 499 of 1865.

\textsuperscript{76} Hill, \textit{Forty-five Years Experience in North Queensland}, p. 31.
hundred in one year on another, and 1,000 in one year on a very large station. Although he was writing to the *Port Denison Times* to justify the squatters' shooting of Aborigines to protect their property and make themselves 'masters of the soil', his claim was not challenged. As he was participating in a vigorous, letter-writing duel, this silence seems to indicate that the critics of the squatters regarded his charge of Aboriginal destructiveness as no exaggeration. The correspondent maintained the conflict was a war of survival, making the usual claim that the Aborigines had abundant natural food and were simply trying to defeat the squatters by destroying their resources. Although this claim often seems to have been justified, there can be little doubt that the Aborigines needed supplementary food.\textsuperscript{77}

As late as 1867 flocks of sheep were utterly destroyed, huts pillaged, and a shepherd killed within fifteen miles of Bowen.\textsuperscript{78} A squatter, John

\textsuperscript{77} P.D.T., 5 June 1869. A letter signed 'Within 100 Miles of Burdekin'.

Yeates, petitioned the Legislative Assembly for almost £800 damages for the loss of over 1,300 sheep and damage to property. He charged that the government was liable because it did not supply adequate protection. His was only one of the stations that had to be abandoned because of the hostility of the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{79} As Yeates was Mayor of Bowen, it is possible that he was making political capital out of a widespread grievance.

Aboriginal hostility was also hindering the small capitalist from opening up 'a small man's frontier'. As late as October 1869, the Editor of the \textit{Port Denison Times} pointed out that pastoralists with about £1,000 capital were not able to benefit from the new Selection Legislation\textsuperscript{80} as they could not afford to employ guards or keep a supply of arms and ammunition. He asserted land

\textsuperscript{79} See Kellet to Col. Sec., 26 January 1865, for another example of a station being abandoned. Also \textit{1868 V. & P.}, p. 52 where the Police Commissioner mentioned the hostility of the Aborigines and other stations being abandoned.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{P.D.T.}, 9 October 1869. Editorial.
was lying idle because only very large capitalists could take it up and, as the pastoral industry was then experiencing an acute depression, there was little hope of attracting them to such an unprofitable venture where their capital was so poorly protected.\textsuperscript{81} The spread of small sugar plantations in the Bowen district was also being hindered by the menace of the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{82}

As in other frontier regions, the high cost of labour inhibited both large and small capitalists.\textsuperscript{83} Yet when labour was abundant in the town, there were few who wanted to brave the perils of bush work despite the attractive wage of 30/- a week.\textsuperscript{84} To take employment anywhere in the bush meant serving as well as an armed guard even on the outskirts of Bowen. An employer could not rely solely on the Native Police and had to arm himself as Inspector

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Bolton, \textit{A Thousand Miles Away}, pp. 39-42 for the pastoral slump of 1866-9.
\item \textit{P.D.T.}, 9 October 1869. Editorial.
\item \textit{P.D.T.}, 28 October 1865; 23 December 1865. Even on 9 October 1869, the Editor was lamenting the lack of cheap labour for the small capitalists.
\item \textit{P.D.T.}, 19 November 1864.
\end{enumerate}
Marlow informed squatter John Yeates who had so dramatically sought damages from the government. Each of Hill's shepherds was equipped with a Terry Rifle and an automatic revolver while his hut was loop-holed to repel Aboriginal assaults. Even today the ruins of stone stockades or blockhouses built by the pioneers can be seen in the Bowen district and indicate the severity of the conflict and the desperation of the squatters. When the Native Police detachment was removed in 1863, there were moves to form a local volunteer cavalry to protect the town and the surrounding district, such was the unsettled nature of the country. The Times declared this project a

85. P.D.T., 31 August 1867.
87. Mr. J. Sullivan, a retired farmer of Ayr, told me there was one near his old farm at Clare. Mr. J. Clive of Ayr confirmed this. There is a huge stone stockade on an open plain on the present Inkerman station, some of the stones, it is stated, weighing (2-3) tons although no such stones can be seen in the vicinity. Such a stockade obviously indicates desperate measures. I have heard of another being dismantled by a grazier unaware of its previous function.
88. P.D.T., 5 September 1868. Also 12 September; 19 September; 26 September. The meeting to form the cavalry was a failure.
'worthy cause'.

The size, distribution, and industry of the Native Police detachments were the constant concern of the people of the Bowen district. Yeates' suing of the government for damages and the well-publicised, but vain, attempt to form a volunteer cavalry were primarily imaginative attempts to force the government to provide more Native Police; for the people of Bowen insisted they were not being adequately protected, despite the large increases in the total force from 1861 to 1865.

At the close of 1864, there were fourteen troopers with their officers at Bowen, eight troopers with their officers at the Bowen River, and none at the Burdekin where they had all deserted; that is, one-sixth of the whole force was then in the Bowen district. At the close of 1865 there were only seven troopers with their officers at Bowen, four with their officers at the Burdekin, and none at the Bowen River. Eleven troopers had been removed despite the increasing
conflict and sent to the newly settled region west of Cardwell. In the same year the number of troopers had been increased from 161 to 187, yet Bowen's proportion had declined to one-seventeenth because of more urgent needs on the rapidly moving frontier. With the depression of 1866-9 government expenditure was everywhere cut and by August 1868 there were only 113 troopers even though they were now used for gold escort as well. The Police Commissioner complained that he couldn't 'keep the blacks quiet' because of the large areas to patrol and

89. Police Commissioner Seymour to Col. Sec., 15 February 1866, Q.S.A. COL/A77 870 of 1866. Distribution of police as at 31 December 1864 and 31 December 1865.

the drought, which meant poor horse fodder. At that time, there were only nine troopers in the Bowen District (at Bowen) the nearest detachments being near Mackay, near Cardwell, on the Belyando, and on the Suttor. The upsurge of concern by the residents of Bowen in 1868, as indicated by the attempt to form a volunteer cavalry, reflected on the government's policy of retrenchment and the Native Police policy, dictated largely by finance, of moving detachments away from settled areas as soon as possible tacitly leaving the colonists to deal with the remaining Aborigines if they were still troublesome. Seymour had informed the Colonial Secretary that he could not provide protection in the Port Denison district but was refused extra finance for more troopers.

As most of the inhabitants of the Bowen

91. Seymour to Col. Sec., 8 January 1869, Q.S.A. COL/A116, 100 of 1869.
92. Seymour to Col. Sec., monthly Return as at 31 August 1868, op. cit.
93. Seymour to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A100, 56 of 1868. A minute indicated the need for economy.
District regarded the conflict as war and the Aborigines as the enemy, they described how they were forced to take the law into their own hands with remarkable frankness. Even 'the other side', those trying to end the bloodshed, regarded the squatters' use of force as largely justifiable and only caviled at the excesses. 94

The first edition of the Times reported a 'dispersal' with calm detachment and approval 95 while in 1865 its Mackay correspondent reported jovially that 'a mob of blacks camped in the vicinity [were] "dispersed" in the usual approved manner'. 96 In 1868, the Editor felt

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94. P.D.T., 5 June 1869. A correspondent signing himself 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'. Others wrote in to defend their hitherto uncriticised actions. Rayner, the editor of the P.D.T., was certainly not conducting a campaign to expose European inhumanity. Like most of his readers he regarded the conflict as a justifiable war against a dangerous enemy. He published letters from squatters describing the justice of their actions as well as those from citizens criticising the excessive use of force.

95. P.D.T., 5 March 1864.

96. P.D.T., 19 August 1865.
impelled to criticise those who were carrying on 'a war of extermination': 'It is not at all uncommon to try the range of a Terry's breech-loader on a mob of blacks, or to hunt them like kangaroos for a sport, or to exterminate them by the score without regard to sex or age'.

These colonists, however, recognized they were invaders and regarded violence as necessary to evict the Aborigines who were preventing the 'civilized' use of the land. When a writer to the Christian Review wrote that destruction of the Aboriginal race was God's vengeance on a 'corrupt, godless, wicked people', the Editor sarcastically rejected such pious justifications:

Nothing more consolatory was ever penned. Thousands of our own Aborigines have been shot down with calm indifference because they were troublesome on the runs, like kangaroos; they have been poisoned with strychnine, in company with the dingoes; they have perished before our eyes from our loathsome diseases, and from our firewater. We have been accustomed to regard these things as a blot upon our Christianity. We learn with gratitude now that in our murders we were but executing the will of Heaven.

97. P.D.T., 8 August 1868. Editorial. As we shall see, the Editor was a hesitant convert to 'the other side'.
98. P.D.T., 17 June 1871.
By the time Rayner penned the above, he could afford the luxury of such self-reproach for the nature of Aboriginal-European relations had changed greatly and his newspaper had played its part in bringing this about. The normalcy of 'dispersing' Aborigines and its acceptance as routine was at last being challenged.